

Story 1810 (1989 Tape 2)

Narrator: Ahmet Uysal, 67

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Karacabey kaza,
Bursa Province

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Misapplied Diet

There was an Arab sheik who suffered from diabetes. He was advised to go to İstanbul and place himself in the care of a famous diabetes specialist there. The sick Arab decided to follow this advice, and so he moved to İstanbul and settled there. After spending a week in İstanbul, where he ate very heartily every day, the Arab went to the office of the diabetes specialist.

The doctor took a sample of the patient's blood and measured the level of his blood sugar. He found it to be very high. He then said, "Hacı",¹ I am going to write out a diet for you, and you must follow it carefully every day.

¹Hacı is a title given to any Moslem who completes the pilgrimage to Mecca. The word means pilgrim. There is nothing in this tale to prove that the Arab was actually a pilgrim--or even that he came from Saudi Arabia, the Arab land closest to Mecca, where a relatively high percentage of Arab residents might be expected to make the relatively short journey to Mecca.

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"All right," said the patient.

The doctor wrote out the diet and handed it to the Arab. As he did so, he said, "You will return here next week at this time, and I shall again measure your blood sugar."

A week later the Arab returned to the doctor's office. When the doctor measured the patient's level of blood sugar, he found that it had not dropped a bit. "Haci, are you following the diet that I gave you?"

"Yes, sir, I follow the diet."

"Very well," said the doctor. "I shall come to your hotel this evening at dinnertime and observe how you follow that diet."

"All right, doctor. I shall look forward to your coming."

At 7:00 o'clock that evening the doctor went to the hotel where the Arab patient was staying and went to his patient's room. As the doctor arrived at that room, a waiter came with a small tray on which was a small, simple meal. The doctor examined the foods on that tray and found them to be exactly what he had placed on the patient's diet. The Arab ate that food, and the small

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tray and dishes were taken away. The two men then talked for a while.

About half an hour later, however, three waiters arrived pushing a table on wheels. On that table were a lamb roast, a large quantity of baked rice, fried chicken, and baklava. This magnificent dining table was wheeled up to where the Arab was sitting. Astonished at what he saw, the doctor asked, "Hacı, what is this?"

"Doctor, sir, I always take the diet which you prescribed before I eat my meal."

Narrator: The Arab apparently thought that the word diet meant drug or medicine.]